

Project Benefits Rural Southern Baghdad

By Cpl. Bill Putnam
122nd MPAD

CAMP AL-SAQR, Baghdad -- Engineers working with the 1st Cavalry Division's 5th Brigade Combat Team have begun working on a road through the city's farming areas that will cut a patrol's commute time down to almost 10 minutes.

The road building project, dubbed "Operation Hardball," started about a week ago, said Capt. Pat Marsh, an engineer project planning officer with the 5th Brigade Combat Team.

The new road, running through 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment's area of operations, runs east-to-west from the Tigris River to Highway 8, a distance of almost seven kilometers.

Before the road was started, a patrol from 1-8 Cavalry's Dog Company had to take either one of two routes to reach River Road that added minutes to their reaction time to rocket attacks or Improvised Explosive Device explosions.

"This road will do a lot of good down here," said Marsh. "Now it will take about 11 minutes to get to River Road instead of almost 30 minutes."

The purpose of the road is really two-fold, said 1st Lt. Matthew R. Henderson, a platoon leader in Company B, 458th Engineers. First, he said it helps the patrols from Dog Company, 1-8 Cavalry move around their patrol areas. Second, it'll help the locals move around.

The road, built by engineers from



Sgt. 1st Class Duane Burns, a platoon sergeant in the 458th Engineer Battalion, looks on as one of his Soldiers levels the road with a grader.



Photos by Cpl. Bill Putnam, 122nd MPAD

An engineer from the 458th Engineers uses an excavator to bury a drainage pipe during the road building near a farm house Dec. 9.

the 458th Engineer Battalion, will be about 30 feet wide and made up of gravel provided by a local contractor, Marsh said. Around him a road grader and bulldozer leveled a section of the road where it made a sharp S-curve around a canal.

It took almost three hours on the morning of Dec. 9, but the grader and dozer leveled the road, straightened it and knocked down a few palm trees to make the road easier to drive.

Part of one mud-brick home lived in by a couple of farmers and their families ran into the road. Marsh and the engineer platoon from the 458th Engineer's Company B supplied building material for a new house.

One of the more alarming things for Marsh about the house was the roof. It was simply canvas tarps held down by bricks and rocks. Part of the supplies Marsh brought in was tin to build a proper roof.

"Even though we had to bring a road in here - which will help them too - we had to help them," Marsh said.

The males in the family were also compensated \$100 for losing part of their front yard and a small mud storage hut.

"A \$100 will go a long ways here,"

Marsh said.

The original intent was to build the farmers a new barn with the materials, Marsh said. But then they took a look around and realized something.

"They were going to have a better barn than a house," Marsh said.

"Is this building ready? Because I'm going to tear it down today," Marsh asked one of the farmers through a translator.

As it turned out, the hut wasn't torn down that day. It was torn down the next.

"We can help them even more in the process of engaging the people," Marsh said.

Henderson's platoon provided security for the guys from the 458th Engineers Company C were doing all the construction work.

The road-building project is also the last mission for the Reserve engineers before they head home to Pennsylvania and demobilize, Henderson.

Out of all the places he's been around the Baghdad area, Henderson said this mission ranks as one of the best.

"It's helping the Soldiers [and] it's helping the locals," he said.

First Team Feeding the Masses for the Holidays

By Master Sgt. Dave Larsen
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Turkey breast, boneless, whole muscle: 27,136 pounds

CAMP AL TAHREER, Baghdad -- Feeding more than 32,000 Soldiers holiday meals is a huge responsibility. The 1st Cavalry Division's senior food operation management noncommissioned officer is Sgt. Maj. Ronnie Davis. It's his job to fill the plates and stomachs of Task Force Baghdad Soldiers, a division-level responsibility with what is now a corps-sized mission.

"Yeah, you could almost call us the '1st Cavalry Corps,'" Davis quipped. "We've gotten that big."

Ham, boneless, cooked, traditional flat oval shape: 13,728 pounds

Holiday meals for troops in the field are special occasions. Because of this, Davis and his staff made the order for Thanksgiving and Christmas meals months in advance. He called Thanksgiving the "Super Bowl" for food service workers. Christmas, he said, is just as important.

"Food plays an important role in keeping a Soldier's morale up," the Gloucester, Va. native said. "And we added some things to make Soldiers feel more at home while they're away from home."

The Thanksgiving meal was served up by costumed dining facility staff members - pilgrims and Native American costuming bringing to mind the first Thanksgiving. Davis said Christmas meals will also be dressed up for the holiday.

"We want to make Christmas even better," Davis said. "Of course, we'll have Santa ... elves ... and reindeer. The division band will be playing music in most of



By Sgt. Christina Rockhill, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

The 1st Cavalry Division's senior food operation management noncommissioned officer, Sgt. Maj. Ronnie Davis admires the Christmas tree in the Pegasus Sports Cafe on Camp Al Tahreer. In addition to decorations, major food orders have been arranged to feed the more than 32,000 Soldiers of Task Force Baghdad.

our facilities and Soldiers will be caroling.

"We want to make this Christmas as memorable as possible for our Soldiers serving here," Davis said.

Turkey gravy, 16-ounce can: 2,168 cans

Lines at First Team dining facilities of Soldiers waiting to be fed are commonplace, but Davis said division dining facilities work hard to meet an established

standard of service.

"First of all, no Soldier will go unfed," Davis said. "It's our policy to bring Soldiers through our dining facilities in 30-minute intervals. We expect to have Soldiers move in, and out in a half hour."

He added that during a typical day, having "to go" items helps Soldiers get in and out quickly.

"We've got pizza bars, taco bars and salad bars," Davis noted. "Plus, many of our younger troops would rather eat a cheeseburger and fries than a steak and baked potato. We try and give them what they want." Sandwich bars, ice cream and dessert bars are also available for Soldiers on the go.

Holiday meals offer greater challenges, though. Davis said the answer to long lines is to serve meals longer ... extending the normal operating hours to give Soldiers more time to enjoy their meals.

Even so, he said crowds are a welcome sight to any dining facility manager.

"If you're a manager, you want to see crowds," Davis said. "It means you're providing a valuable service. I'd prefer to see crowds than seeing nobody coming."

Pie, pumpkin, frozen, 9-inch diameter: 2,202 pies

No stranger to deployments, Davis is a 20-year veteran who misses his two children: son Cordaro, a 17-year-old high school senior, and daughter Regine, the 7-year-old apple of her Daddy's eye. Both children are living in the Washington, D.C. area while he's deployed.

Davis understands the hardship of separation from family and friends, especially over the holidays. It keeps him and his crew focused on making holiday meals a special event for every Soldier.

"I do what I do for the love of Soldiers," the 20-year Army veteran said.

Useful Iraqi Words/Phrases

Where can I change the baby?
ayn ughayyeer al-fuwaT liT-Tifl?

Thursday
High: 47
Low: 28



Friday
High: 47
Low: 25



Saturday
High: 48
Low: 28



Weather information provided by 1CD Staff Weather Office (SWO)

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News Notes

Do-It-Yourself
Not Always Best

LOWBER, Pa. (AP) -- A woman was charged with maiming and mutilating animals for performing two cat operations in her home. Loria Bauer was a do-it-yourself vet who mangled the paw of a kitten Nov. 15 when its owner paid \$50 for the procedure. That cat was taken to a licensed vet two weeks later for surgery to repair its wounds after it developed a fever and it didn't heal properly. Police added another charge when they found that another cat owner paid Bauer \$80 to neuter and declaw the animal in her home in September.

Prison Pork Chop-
Stabbing is Painful

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) -- A prison inmate in Cleveland County is accused of stabbing another prisoner with a sharpened pork chop bone. Lexington Correctional Center inmate Erenesto Hernanced-Rosales, 39, was charged Wednesday with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. Hernandez-Rosales got into a fight with the other inmate on Nov. 28 and stabbed the man under the left eye with the bone. The bone had been sharpened and fashioned into a weapon. "It did break the skin, but it hit that cheek bone below the eye socket, so the injuries were not life-threatening," said spokeswoman Genese McCoy. "He was very lucky."

Christmas Heads off to Iraq

(Seattle Times) -- Jessica Olsen, 11, worked the shrink-wrap like a pro yesterday - wrapping groups of shoebox-sized packages together for an impending journey of thousands of miles.

Some of the boxes under her fingers may have held the handwritten notes and pictures she and her brothers, Mark and Luke, wrote to brighten the holidays of U.S. troops far from home this Christmas.

"We wanted to say thank you to them for keeping us safe," Jessica said.

The gift boxes are part of "Operation Iraq: The Spirit of Christmas," an all-volunteer effort based in Kirkland to get holiday packages to troops before Christmas.

After months of work collecting and packing donations, the group loaded the boxes onto waiting trucks, which hauled them to an undisclosed military base. From there, the packages will be flown to Iraq, where they will be passed out to troops in time for Christmas.

"That's the one request we made, that they be passed out by Christmas morning to those who had not received anything from home," said Ruth Ann Young, who started the program out of her storefront last year.

Young started her first troop-gift campaign after her downtown Kirkland store, The Spirit of Christmas, sustained smoke damage from a



Seattle Times

Luke Olsen, 11, leaps off the truck and heads back for another load of Christmas gift boxes assembled by volunteers and destined for troops in Iraq.

neighboring fire. Unable to replace the damaged merchandise in time for the holiday, she decided to use her store space to package donated gifts to U.S. troops in Iraq. This year, a Totem Lake Mall storefront was converted into ground zero for the operation.

"The operation has taken on a life of its own," Young said. "The generosity and camaraderie of everyone here - everyone has the same desire to see this succeed."

13th COSCOM, 3rd Signal, MPs Return Home

FORT HOOD, Texas (Killeen Daily Herald) -- Three groups of Fort Hood Soldiers returned from Iraq Tuesday.

Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company and 4th Corps Material Management Center, 13th Corps Support Command; 3rd Signal Brigade; and 89th Military Police Brigade greeted their families during three separate ceremonies held at COSCOM Gym.

The 213 4th CMMC soldiers arrived at the gym at 9:20 p.m., more than five hours past their scheduled return time. The unit, as well as the HHC, deployed in January and performed support missions at Camp Anaconda in Balad.

"Every one of you sleep under this flag of freedom because of those Soldiers coming home tonight," said Staff Sgt. Terry Mack, a 4th Infantry Division soldier and the master of ceremonies for Fort Hood homecomings.

Carrie Fox, along with 5-



Killeen Daily Herald

Carrie Fox dances with her 6-month-old daughter, to "Y.M.C.A." while waiting for her husband, Capt. Dan Fox, to return from Iraq with the 13th Corps Support Command at the COSCOM gymnasium.

year-old son Camren and 6-month-old daughter Cara, had been waiting for Capt. Dan Fox to return from Iraq since June. The couple arrived at Fort

Hood in April, celebrated Cara's birth in May, and said farewell when Dan deployed in June.

"We were so thankful that he was able to be there," Carrie said. "But we were sad that he had to leave and miss so much."

Carrie kept Dan updated with phone calls and e-mail photos. She said she would tell Cara when she's older about her Dad's accomplishments.

"We are so proud of him," she said.

The plane with 175 Soldiers from 13th COSCOM, 4th CMMC, and 3rd Signal was expected to arrive at 9:50 p.m. the same night.

The 115 89th MP Soldiers arrived at 5 a.m. Tuesday morning, three hours behind schedule. The MPs also deployed in January 2004. They were stationed in Baghdad and attached to the Multi-National Corps-Iraq, which is led by III Corps Headquarters elements.

Southern Miss Routs North Texas in Bowl

NEW ORLEANS (AP) -- Dustin Almond threw for 247 yards and a touchdown and ran for another score, leading Southern Mississippi to its first bowl victory in four years, 31-10 over North Texas in the New Orleans Bowl on Tuesday night.

Linebacker Michael Boley helped put the game away, returning an interception 62 yards for a touchdown early in the fourth quarter. Boley,



AP

Southern Mississippi quarterback Dustin Almond (9) throws a pass during first half New Orleans Bowl action against North Texas Tuesday. Southern Mississippi defeated North Texas 31-10.

named MVP of the first bowl of the postseason, finished with eight tackles including two sacks.

North Texas' season had been defined by overcoming adversity. Quarterback Andrew Smith died in a car accident just before training camp, starting running back Patrick Cobbs injured his knee in the second game of the season and never returned, and the Mean Green lost their first four games before winning seven straight to earn their fourth-straight trip to the New Orleans Bowl.

But Southern Miss (7-5), who narrowly lost to No. 4 California earlier this month, outplayed North Texas throughout.

North Texas, the four-time Sun Belt Conference champion, dropped to 1-3 in the New Orleans Bowl. Tailback Jamario Thomas, who missed North Texas' final regular-season game with a sore hamstring, finished with 92 yards on 30 carries. His season total of 1,801 fell 62 yards short of former Wisconsin running back Ron Dayne's freshman record of 1,863 yards.

Thomas entered the game averaging 189.9 yards, but struggled against Southern Miss, bouncing off hard hits and spinning out of numerous tackles. The Golden Eagles pulled him down for several losses as he rushed for minus-13 yards in the third quarter.

USM also pressured North Texas quarterback Scott Hall relentlessly, sacking him six times, and once forcing him to rush a third-and-goal throw that sailed over the outstretched arms of a wide-open Beau Davidson in the end zone. The play forced the Mean Green to settle for Nick Bazaldua's 24-yard field goal. That was their only score until Hall's 10-yard scoring pass to Johnny Quinn with one second left.

Homeless Expos' Move to Washington Hits a Bump

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Major league baseball's return to Washington might be for one year only.

The District of Columbia Council voted Tuesday night to require private financing for at least half the cost of a new ballpark for the Expos, a move that could cause the commissioner's office to reopen the search for a long-term home for the franchise.

Capping an 11½-hour session filled with contentious debate, the council voted 7-6 to approve legislation to finance construction of a ballpark. But the bill contained the amendment on private financing, a provision not contained in the September agreement between

the Expos and Washington Mayor Anthony A. Williams.

"We will review the amendments and the legislation as passed and have a response tomorrow," said Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer.

If the law stands, baseball's likely response would be to have the team play the 2005 season at Washington's RFK Stadium, where it would be known as the Nationals, while baseball's search committee resumes negotiations with cities that desire the team.

Washington's new team would start play April 4 at Philadelphia and play its home opener April 14 against Arizona at RFK Stadium.



AP

With a "NO" banner in the foreground, Washington Mayor Anthony Williams, right, D.C. Sports Commission Chairman Mark Tuohey, left, look as a the D.C. City Council debates stadium finance legislation for the return of the Expos to the capital.

In Brief

Stone Sues Over Plastic Surgery

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) -

- Actress Sharon Stone



wants you to know her face is real. So she has sued a Beverly Hills

plastic surgeon for defamation and libel for falsely claiming that he gave her a facelift. Arthur Barends, lawyer for plastic surgeon Renato Calabria, says the star of "Basic Instinct" can relax. He said his client never represented to anyone that he performed plastic surgery on Stone 46. "All he has ever done is discuss vertical face surgery, a technique he innovated and articles have speculated that Stone had the procedure," the lawyer said. *US Weekly* printed an article in an August issue headlined "Did Sharon Stone Have Surgery?"

Prinze Sr. Honored on Walk of Fame

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- Freddie Prinze Jr. shed tears Tuesday as he unveiled a Hollywood Walk of Fame star for his late father, who committed suicide in 1977. The elder Prinze was a standup comic who had a successful run in the sitcom *Chico and the Man* before ending his life at age 22. The younger Prinze, star of the *Scooby-Doo* movies and teen romances like *She's All That*, was only 10 months old when his father died. Comedian George Lopez, who nominated the late comedian and sponsored the star, also attended the ceremony.